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SHOCHIKU  
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"SHIRAIISHI BANASHI"

APC  
21/8/46

*Travelling Troupe* (A Tale of Shiraishi)

Written by

To be performed at the by

Sumizo's troupe in September,

1946.

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### Synopsis:

When Miyogino, a famous courtesan in Yoshiwara, was reading a book, her comrades brought a country girl to her to amuse her, because her language is strange. The latter was employed by the master of the house. But it was made clear that she was the real younger sister of Miyagino, who was seeking for her to inform their father's death. They were greatly grieving over their misfortune, when their master, Soroku appeared before them. He sympathized with them greatly and set them free from bondage, giving them back the bonds of debt.

### CHARACTERS

Daikokuya Sōkichi  
Miyafune, young courtesan  
Miyashiba, "  
Miyazato, "  
Miyagino, Oiran (courtesan)  
Shinobu, her younger sister  
Omasa, Yarite (procuress)  
Shigeri, Kamuro (young maid)  
Tayori "



Scene: On the Second Floor of Daikokuya

A room with balustrades on three sides. Miyafune is touching up the coiffure of Miyagino. Behind them, is standing a young girl named Shigeri.

The evening bell is tolling and many lanterns are already bright within the Yukaku (gay quarters) and gay sounds of music and dancing are flowing from there. The room of Miyagino is an inner one upstairs. It is splendid and fine with many furniture.

(Miyashiba and Miyazato appear with books.)

Miyazato: Well, Miyagino, the keeper a lending library has just come and left this book for you as it is the continuation of the last story. Now, Miyashiba, perhaps today's guests are those who have come here from Tsutaya in Nakanoocho, Dress yourself quickly, not to speak of Miyagino.

Miyashiba: Oh, how you are bustling, I'm making ready for it already. By the way, isn't there any five gentleman among them?

Miyazato: All of them are samurai. (warriors) One of them is a fine-looking man, while another is a warrior with a shaggy beard and big eyes. One cannot distinguish him from a bear. What a disagreeable thing it is to entertain such an ugly man!

Miyagino: Don't speak ill of guest, please, for the old women (procuresses) may scold us.



Miyazato: What if they should scold us! By the way, our master brought home yesterday a girl, whom he employed at Asakusa. How strange her language is!

Miyashiba: Oh, yes! She said she had come up to Yedo to seek for her elder sister. Oh, let's bring her here for the pleasure of Miyagino.

(The two oiran go away.)

Miyagino: How noisy they are? These young women seem to have no trouble of life, speaking freely what they want, quite ignorant of the others. Now, Shigeri, begin to tidy up the room.

Shigeri: Yes, Ma'am.

(From under the stair, the voice "Now come here," is heard. Three young women bring a country girl, Shinobu, with them and push her towards Miyagino. Shinobu, was unwilling to come. She looks around her with a startled look.)

Shinobu: Oh, dear! What's the matter? As I was lying to rest, these young women called me to come with them, saying there was something to do. They forced me to come upstairs. But what sort of a room is it? There are finely ~~lax~~ lacquered bureaux as bright as the combs of courtesans. And these beddings and bedclothes! They are all silk! How bright their colors are! If I should lie on them, they might be torn, being caught on my chapped ankles. I'm quite dazzled to see them!



Miyazato: (Keeping her face straight)

Well, my girl. "here is your native country?

Why did you come up to Yedo? Tell us the reason.

Miyashiba: Tell me your story, then we shall be your help.

Shinobu: (Not knowing that they are making fun of her,)

(she begins to weep, touched with their words.)

How kind you are! My native country is the village near Shirasaka in Ooshū, (northern Japan) For some reason, I parted with my "bather" and "bother". Because I heard that Yedo is a thriving town and because I wanted to seek for my elder sister who was said to be a famous courtesan in Yoshiwara, I have come up here. There are lots of reasons for my travelling, you see.

Miyazato: I can't understand what you have said.

Miyashiba: Moreover, it's too vague a story to seek for her elder sister, a famous courtesan, in this wide Yoshiwara.

Shinobu: Oh, that's because I am asking for your help.

Yesterday, a man with a terrible looking came to me, saying that he would help me to look for my sister and urged me to get on a palanquin, when your master appeared to rescue me out of this crisis. So I stayed at this house from last evening. It's already determined from our precedent life that I stay at this house and receive your kindness, you see. My story is true. I'm not telling a "red heart."

Miyazato: The more she speaks the more complicating her language is.

Miyashiba: And I can't understand what "red heart" means.



(All burst into laughter, when Miyagino who is familiar to the language of Shinobu, draws near.)

Miyagino: Each country has its own language, you see. So don't laugh at her, I pay you. The words "bather" and "bother" mean father and mother and the word "red-heart" means a lie, you see. She meant to say that she was not telling a lie.

Miyazato: I'm surprised at your knowledge.

Miyagino: That's because I talk each day with guests from every provinces of the country. Oh, I remember the guests are waiting for me in the back room. Perhaps they may be impatient go first, both of you, as I'll follow you afterwards, and put in a good word for me.

Two young women: All right, ma'am.

Miyagino: Well, Shigeri, go to the Izutsuya's in Nakanoocho and get yesterday's answer.

Shigeri: Yes, all right, ma'am.

Miyagino: Hurry along.

(When Miyagino urges all of them to go away quickly, the procuress, Omasa, appears. As she is a strict woman, all stand up to go away.)

Omasa: Well, women, the guests are waiting for you impatiently. What have you been doing?

Miyazato: Importunate old woman! I'm going right away.

Miyashiba: I'm not selfish as to select my guests. So long.

(Seeing them go away, Miyagino draws near Shinobu.)



Miyagino: According to your story, you are looking for your elder sister, aren't you? Where is your native village?

Shinobu: Well, my native country is Sakai-mura, a village near Shirashaka in Ooshu. (northern Japan)

Miyagino: I think there lived a man named Yomosaku in the village.

Shinobu: Yes, his my father.

Miyagino: Oh, then you are my sister.

(She holds on Shinobu, who pushed her out.)

Shinobu: Stay for a minute. My mother used to say, "Your elder sister is sure to have got an amulet case. When you meet her, you must introduce yourselves to each other after she has shown it to you. If your amulet cases are the same, then tell her all details about us." So if you have got the amulet case, with you show it at once, please.

Miyagino: How clever you are! You are quite right that you are suspicious about me. I'll show it to you.

(She takes out an amulet case.)

When I left my native country, Mother gave me this, telling me to treat it with respect and care.

Father was a ronin, a detached samurai.

Shunobu: Mine is an amulet of the  $\S$  Tsutsui Hachiman Shrine in the province of Kochi.

Miyagino: I'm your real sister as I've got the same one.

Shinobu: Oh, dear, I've been so anxious to see you!



(When they are embracing each other quite in ecstasy, Sokichi, master of the house, comes upstairs to see what was the matter with Miyagino as she was delayed to appear before the guests. Hiding himself in a corner, he listens to them.)

Miyagino: Oh, my sister. I'm so glad you have come. Perhaps father or mother might accompany you as you are too young to travel all by yourself. Are you separated from them on the way?

(Shinobu begins to cry.) Probably there is no sad thing since we meet each other, is there? Stop crying and tell all about yourself.

Shinobu: Then, don't you know anything about our misfortune. Oh, you were so far away from us!

Miyagino: I know what? What has happened to my parents?

Shinobu: Last march, heavy rains went on falling, and there was a disastrous flood because the embankment of the Hirose gave way on account of the rain.

Miyagino: So sorry!

Shinobu: Our house and fields were swept away by the flood and father lost his life for it.

Miyagino: Alas!

(She has an attack of spasm. Shinobu is quite startled to see her suffering from it.)

Shinobu: Oh, sister, what's the matter with you?

(At this moment, Sokichi, master of this house, throws down a case of medicine towards them, which Shinobu takes up and, mixed with hot water, pours into the mouth of her sister.)

Have a stout heart, sister, I ~~am~~ pray you.



Miyagino: Oh, I'm quite all right. Now go on your story.

Shinobu: Well, we were on the point of being drowned, when my uncle came to relieve us from danger. We dug out the body of father right away, but he never came to life again. So we buried him. That was very very sad, you know. I met your betrothed, but he went up to Yedo immediately after that. So I have lived with mother all alone, but she was taken ill soon.

Miyagino: Was she ill? And was she restored again, I suppose?

Shinobu: No, she got worse day by day and at last, on the 16th of June, she passed away.

Miyagino: Alas! She died!

Shinobu: You lament over it so much, only by hearing my story. But imagine my grief when I got through all these misfortunes without any one to help me. It's hard not to weep over them, but I'm afraid you should fall ill by grieving too much. You are only person whom I must rely on.

Miyagino: No, don't be anxious about me. Now go on your story.

Shinobu: My uncle, who is a village master, took me to his house from that time and urged me to go out to serve, but I was so anxious to see you that I left home regardless of consequences, saying him that I was going on a pilgrimage. I have endured every hardship on my travelling, only in the hope to see you. But now that I found you out at last, I feel blue, not knowing why, as if my bones broke away. Instead of crying so much, just tell me, "It was very good of you to come to see me from a great distance."



Miyagino: It's quite natural that you should think in such a way. But you were happy enough as you lived with your parents for a long time. Just think of me. Father could not pay land-tax and was going to be thrown into prison. To help him out of this disgrace, I offered to sacrifice myself and came to this house. I was twelve years old at that time, and you were only five. You could not know me. How unhappy I am, not to have been able to see them on their death-beds! I didn't know their deaths at all. I only thought my sister would inform me if any misfortune should happen. I planned to return home immediately after I may have served my term out, and make them happy. In vain, I have applied myself to my duty diligently! Though I am very glad to see you, my heart is full of sorrow, by hearing your sad story. Oh, I have forgotten to ask you about my betrothed. Did you say he was in Yedo, didn't you? Perhaps you know his address, didn't you?

Shinobu: I did hear it, but I have all forgotten.

Miyagino: You don't know it?

Shinobu: Let me see. Only "Yedo" won't do?

Miyagino: You can't understand how large a city Yedo is. It's eight hundred and eight cho wide.

Shinobu: Is it so wide?

Miyagino: After all it's a hopeless desire to see him.

Shinobu: What shall I do, Sister?

Miyagino: I can't go to look for him as I was ordered not to go out, from here. I'm a captive bird, you know.

Shinobu: Dear me!

(They weep, At that time Soroku appears.)



Miyagino: On, Master, when did you come here?

Soroku: I came here some time ago. No, I'am here just now.  
Are you lamenting over the rule of these gay quarters  
that you should not go out of this house to see your  
betrothed?

Miyagino: Yes, sir.

Shoroku: It's not only you that are unfortunate. There's no ~~an~~  
courtesan in this quarter who did not sacrifice  
herself for the sake of her parents or her husband.  
But we need to keep them in order to enterlain the  
guests. Suppose I have a son who would engage courtesans  
and give himself up to pleasure. Perhaps I as a father  
shall cry to him "Soonndrel, go away!" Or I shall  
banish him from home or scold him severely. But on the  
other hand, when a rich young man comes here as a guest,  
I, as a master, shall order you to make much of him,  
saying, "How generous he is! He is a promising guest."  
This is a very selfish way of trade. People call the  
master of Yukaku (gay quarters) "Kutsuso" "One who has  
lost eight virtues." Because there one's eight virtues will  
be lost, such as benevolence, righteousness, propriety,  
wisdom, royalty, fidelity, filial piety and brotherly  
love. It was written so in a book. But one can't help it  
in the course of life. Though I am a man to be called  
"Kutsuso", I as a man, know what humanity is.

Miyagino and Shinobu: Oh!

Soroku: You are set free. This is my farewell gift to you.



Myagino: Oh, both of us are set free!

Myagino and Shinobu: Oh, these are our bonds of debt.

Shokichi: Any animal or bird know love between parents  
and children. This is a service for the dead.  
Well, try your life anew, both of you.

The curtain falls.